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larger and higher, generally with a separate cooking hut; and he is learning the Hindu habit of periodic re-plastering of the floors with cow-dung.

Hair-dressing

It was observed above that a Hill Maria's head with a round patch of hair on the crown drawn back into a top-knot and the rest shaved, but often stubbly or only less long than the crown patch, resembles in appearance a hill-crest with a clearing all around for *penda* cultivation and a grove of trees left standing on the summit. This is the old style of coiffure for men in the Abujhmar mountains, but the younger men incline to imitate Muria or Bison-horn Maria fashions. There are no recognized barbers among them; every man keeps his own razor and shaves his friends, who return the compliment. The razor blade is made by the nearest blacksmith from locally collected ore, and is shaped like a little single-edged *dao*, the edge being convexly curved, and the blade fitted into a small cylindrical wooden handle by a pointed tang heated and then worked into the round end of the handle; the greatest length of the blade varies from 7 to 8·5 cm., the greatest breadth is about 2 cm., and the handle is generally about 6 to 6·5 cm. long. They are kept wrapped in a dirty rag to prevent rust, and tucked into the loin-cloth near the small of the back. The barber grasps his patient's crown-tuft in his left hand, tilts his head forward, pours water over the hair to be removed, and pushes the razor-blade downwards from the crown through the hair, stropping the blade at intervals on his own calves or thigh, and wiping off any hair adhering to it on the patient's head. He first shaves the back of the head and neck, measuring the length of the crown patch to be left unshaved by the length of the crown-tuft as it hangs down unknotted; he then shaves the sides behind the ears and above the cheeks, including side-whiskers if any, and ends with the front of the skull. He shaves efficiently and quickly. There is seldom need to trim beard or moustache. The old and middle-aged have their heads shaved only once or twice a year, if as often; but it is thought slack for a younger man not to do so every month. There are no religious or social occasions, such as births, weddings, funerals, or visits to the clan-god, when shaving is obligatory. It is dangerous to leave your hair where your enemy or some witch or wizard may get hold of it; so you gather it, take it well into the jungle, hold it to your lips and puff it away, so depriving it of your personality or *jiwa* and making it useless for any magic.

Many of the younger men imitate the Bison-horn fashion of coiffure. A straight fringe or *witto* is left, varying from 4 cm. in length over the centre of the forehead to 2·5 cm. over the temples

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343 231 other minor grains. Where timber is not available, these sties are made from bamboos, or even from stones. Similar but, of course, far smaller structures are made to serve as hen-coops, resting generally against the side or front of the houses.

778 361 [824] The shrine of the Village Mother, as has been stated above, is sometimes actually inside the village dormitory, sometimes just outside it, and sometimes at a considerable distance from the actual village, in a grove, if possible of *saja* (*Terminalia tomentosa*—everywhere the sacred tree of the Gond) trees. Sometimes there is also in the village, often at the end of the street opposite the dormitory, the hut-temple of the *pen* or clan-god, containing the log-frame image of the god. This will normally be found only in the village of the *pen-wadda'i* or priest of the clan-god; but sometimes, where the villages of the clan are far apart, there may be two copies of the clan-god, or the god may go to visit other villages, and have a resting-shed in each; or he may have begotten a son to deputize for him in the distant village; I have seen in a *pen-rawar* (clan-god's temple) both the *pen* himself and an embryo 'son' in the second of his three years' 'gestation'. The *pen* is always covered by a shed; but the Village Mother sometimes is just a cairn or a basket-cylinder filled with stones, or a low table-stone at the foot of a *saja* tree, and close by there is a small shed of grass thatch with open sides in which are kept the cooking pots, ladles and sacrificial knife used at ceremonial feasts. The sacred grove may in very rare cases, in villages near the edge of the lowlands, have also a hut-temple of Danteshwari Mai or Maolai, the most revered or feared Hindu deities of Bastar.

343 841 There will be found well apart from the houses and the rest of the village a menstruation hut in many villages, known as *padawo'-gha'i* to the Hill Marias, or sometimes as *dola-lon*. Here all menstruating women are secluded from the village for a week every month. Sometimes the hut has a single room, about 6 by 5 feet, with walls 3 feet high, with no windows and only a small door little bigger than the entrance to an English kennel; sometimes there are two rooms separated from each other by a partition, so that when a girl is afraid of being secluded by herself a duenna may sleep within sound of her without actual contact. The door of the seclusion room always opens away from the village, so that the affected woman may get out at night to answer the call of nature without overlooking the village or being visible to any villager. Special cooking pots and utensils are kept in the seclusion room, or else the woman's food is cooked outside and left by her door for her. [789 824] The roof is often covered with seed-bearing twigs of castor-oil plants, in all parts of India regarded as very efficacious against magic.

[text continues on p. 106]

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procession at Jagdalpur. The Dantewara temple observes several of the local *pandum*, if in a Hinduized form, while the ceremonies of the isolated Telanga villages now surrounded by a sea of Bison-horn Maria villages have become little different from those of the Bison-horn Marias. Hinduization there is, and has long been; but that alone does not account for the differences between the ritual of the Bison-horn Maria and that of the Hill Maria and his Muria neighbours. The physical differences between the two sections of Marias are slight, but their traditions are different, and at least it is clear that they represent different waves of migration. The remarkable differences of dancing, drumming, singing and ritual, and in the intonation, words and inflexions of their dialects, which make them mutually unintelligible, cannot be explained merely by saying that the Bison-horn Marias are 'more advanced' and more in contact with Hinduism and Telugu influences than the Hill Marias.

Note.

Mr. E. S. Hyde, I.C.S., has, since this book went to the press, kindly sent me a note of an interesting recent investigation by the police at Madder in Bhopalpatnam zamindari. A Mohammedan woman asleep on the night of June 13th, 1937 in her courtyard was slightly wounded with a knife or arrow over her right ribs, and woke to see what she believed to be two Marias running away. The police enquiry elicited information that many Marias in Kutru zamindari (i.e. Bison-horn Marias or Hill Marias of the plains in long contact with Doria or Bison-horn influence; the true Hill Marias would not venture down to Madder), before sowing try to get some human blood, especially of women, to mix with their seed. Their usual method is to go to distant villages by night and inflict slight wounds on sleeping women with a knife or arrow. They then take the blood-stained weapon home, and wash it with water, in which they steep their rice seed before sowing, confident of securing thereby a bumper crop. Before wounding their victim they offer near her cot a little rice and turmeric; such an offering was found near the Madder woman's cot.

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Chapter XV

Birth and Childhood

A. Hill Marias

No Marias are unaware of the causal connexion between intercourse and pregnancy, and all women know when they miss their first menstruation that they are probably starting to bear a child. Pregnancy among Hill Marias is attended by no taboo either for man or wife, so far as I could ascertain, and the wife continues performing her ordinary routine work right up to the last day of her pregnancy. Sexual intercourse, however, ceases as soon as pregnancy is known to have begun.

During ordinary menstruation, as we have seen in Chapter VI, the wife, like all young women, is secluded for five or six days either in the communal menstruation hut, or in the *kala* or menstruation room or the separate menstruation hut of the house. The menstruation huts, whether communal or private, are known as *pedawo'gha'i*, or (in the south of the Abujhmar hills) as *dola-low*, or (in the extreme north) as *kurma-low*. The term *pedawo'gha'i* is applied also sometimes to the *kala* room in the houses. These huts and rooms have been described already on pages 104-6. The Hill Marias say that their clan-god and their Departed would be angry if they gave up their immemorial custom of secluding their women during menstruation, and that no man should see a woman's face at such a time; we have seen that they often guard against the magic of women in this condition by placing castor oil plants and seeds on the roof of the hut when it is occupied. The men do not seem to have any clear idea of what happens to a woman at such times; they only know and say that she 'has gone *pedawo'gha'i*'. There is no ceremony of any kind at a girl's first menstruation, or during pregnancy. Though children are generally born in the menstruation room or hut, and for some time after birth the mother has to live there, subject to the same prohibitions as during menstruation, yet during her nine months she is free from the ordinary taboos to which she is subject during menstruation; that is to say, she is free to visit her husband in the fields and to cook his food for him, in fact to do all her ordinary household and field or market tasks. But it is taboo for a pregnant woman to pick or break anything growing. There may possibly be certain prohibitions which I did not discover,

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843 secluded for their first menstruation, known as the *piki-kurma-lon*; but generally speaking, Bison-horn Marias do not seem to hold in the same strength the Hill Maria fear of a woman in this condition.

844 For the birth of a child a separate hut or booth is erected in the compound, generally at the back of the house, known as the *er-nihitana-lon*, or water-washing hut. This is often little more than the roughest of booths, and considerably inferior to even a Bison-horn Maria pigsty. Here the mother remains for a full month, during which her husband is not allowed to go to his work. The delivery is assisted by an experienced woman relative or fellow-villager, who cuts and binds the navel-cord and washes the child immediately after it is born, and gives it to the mother to suckle. No food is given to the mother that day; on the next morning she is made to drink a decoction of the bark of the *kusum* [824] tree (*Schleichera trijuga*), the root of the dwarf *chhind* palm (*Phoenix sylvestris*), and *kulthi* (*Dolichos biflorus*) pulses, pounded to a powder and boiled together, and an hour or two after this dose she is given a meal of warm boiled rice. She is dosed and fed in this way for six or seven days more, until the navel-cord falls off; and then she washes her whole body and is allowed to eat regular meals. At the 852 end of the month the *lon-wa'ina* or Returning to the House ceremony 533 takes place. The child is named with the aid of a medium, though actually names seem to be given for reasons very similar to those actuating Hill Maria choice of names. A pig, a goat or a number of cocks are killed, and the mother, having washed her clothes and her body, cooks the flesh, all the villagers and relatives being entertained to dinner. Thenceforward the mother is free to resume all her normal household and field work, and the father can resume his work.

553 I once witnessed an unusual naming ceremony. A son had been born after three elder brothers had died. It was considered 789 that their deaths had been due to the hostility of some demon or of the familiar spirit of some magician, and on the medium's advice the baby had been suspended in a rough cradle over the rubbish-heap by the fence of the *bari* garden, and all the men present threw cow-dung and filth all round the cradle, shouting out '*Kacharu*' or 'Filth!', which name was given to the child in the hope that thereby the malignant power would be deceived into thinking that the parents set no value on the child.

862 Children are breast-fed for two years or more, as among the Hill Marias. It has been already recorded (page 219) that there is among the Bison-horn Marias a special weaning ceremony during the Jata Pandum at which the first solid food given to the children is a portion of the rice and meat offered to the Departed.

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a woman at this time. At the menarche (for which the word used is *kumor utta*, 'the blossoming of the flower'), however, a special hut is built for the girl by women outside the village. A woman of the household brings her food and sleeps with her at night; she must bathe whenever she returns to the house. In some villages, the Marias still make a platform up a tree for the girl, who during the day must hide herself in the forest.

It is very dangerous for anyone to see, let alone to touch, a girl at her menarche. At Tikanpal I was told that if a man saw such a girl as he went through the jungle he should slap her and then go to her parents and after rebuking them, demand a fowl which he should sacrifice; then he should bathe and anoint himself with oil. At Gadapal they said that a man should throw a lump of earth between his legs at the girl, or a stick over his shoulder, and then go home and bathe. Neglect of these precautions might lead to blindness.

At the end of the period—all this refers only to the first period—the girl destroys her hut or platform during the night, throws away her cloth,[1] bathes and returns home before cockcrow. In some villages she is expected to remain for a day or two longer on the veranda of her house: if she has a married elder brother, it is the special duty of his wife to attend to her. Then she puts oil and turmeric on her body—an act which is said to symbolize her formal re-admission into caste, for during the previous days she has been regarded as excommunicated. In many Maria villages, however, the ceremonial use of turmeric is still unknown, and the elder brother's wife carries a pot of water round the house and sprinkles everyone saying, 'Now you are back again in caste'. After this the girl fetches water in an earthen pot and cowdungs the floor. In the evening her father invites some of the elders to a bottle of liquor and says, 'My daughter who was unclean all these days is now clean again'. He sacrifices a fowl to the Departed and they feast on its flesh.

There is not nearly so much fuss about the later periods. The woman has to keep out of the way, but there is no danger in looking at her, and when it is over she just has a bath and resumes her ordinary duties. But even so her daily programme is considerably disturbed. She must not sleep inside the house and, of course, sexual intercourse is strictly forbidden. She must not cook or fetch water or go to work in the fields. She must not touch cattle, pigs

[1] There do not seem to be any special taboos associated with this cloth. But the leaf-cups from which the girl eats at this time are charged with magical potency and if a witch can get hold of them she can afflict the girl with palsy.

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doorway while his parents encouraged him and the old women shouted ribald jokes. At last he plucked up courage and made a dash for the girl. Her companions resisted him but at last, of course, he broke through them, seized the girl and dragged her weeping loudly into the house. The girls rushed after them and pushed and hustled them into an inner room and shut the door on them, the theory being that they would consummate the marriage there and then. The old women stood round the hut trying to look inside and discussing the bridegroom's potency. The cock which is often stolen by the bride's party from the bridegroom's house was here given as a present with a little cloth to the bride's younger sister.

This was the end of one marriage. The other was a surprise. The girls came dancing with the shrouded bride up to the house, the bridegroom put on a new shirt for the occasion, his mother brought water to wash the feet of her new daughter-in-law. Everything was ready, but after the girls had danced round once or twice in front of the house, they made as if to go right round it in honour of the Departed. Everybody waited for them to complete the circuit and return, but their voices grew fainter and fainter, and I went out to see them dancing away into the forest. It was then explained to the unfortunate bridegroom that certain ceremonies had to be performed in Gogonda to protect the bride against magical dangers with which she was threatened and that she would be returned to him in three days' time.

It was then six o'clock and we returned to camp.

VIII

On February 2nd, 1942 there was celebrated at Ghotpal near Barsur the great Marhai and Pen-Karsita of the Lekhami clan. Directly I arrived and made my camp under some trees I was greeted by a little deputation of local priests who told me very politely but quite firmly that though they were delighted to have me there I would not be permitted to take any photographs or write anything down. Later I went with Mr. Sampat Singh to the shrine of the Ghotpal clan-god, the Anga, Usendi Pen, with whom are his sons Hunga and Wella and his daughter Wange. I was at once surrounded by people telling me that I must not go inside. An elderly magician approached me and in a stern voice told me to take my hat off, for I was looking at a god. Such instructions are unusual in aboriginal India.

Nothing happened that day, but people began to assemble and many merchants arrived and set up their booths in a line along the edge of the great open dancing-ground in front of the shrine.

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THE MURIA'S LIVELIHOOD

The Field-houses

In many places, regular field-houses (*kotul*) are built with proper roofs and even walls. For long periods the whole family goes to live in these; there is no taboo on women, even on menstruating women, provided they do not enter the fields in this condition. Here the family cooks, works and lives.

But women are not permitted to go to the *tondi*. These little platforms, raised ten or twelve feet above the ground on poles—'the four brothers have one top-knot'[1]—are generally roofed, and furnished with a mat, a pot for fire, some firewood. The only two places where a Muria boy sleeps regularly are the ghotul and the *tondi*. During the season when the crops are ripening, the ghotul are almost deserted by the chelik who are all on duty in the fields. The rule against their taking a motiari with them is not due to the fear that she may distract their attention from their duties—Muria girls are not accustomed to do that—but because of the danger of her beginning her menstrual period on the platform and so ruining the crops. But it is, of course, very necessary for the chelik to keep awake. An old woman at Masora said, 'When my son goes to watch the fields, I fill his belly with gruel: then he has to piss all night, and keeps awake to drive away the pigs'. It is not taboo to have sexual intercourse in a field; on the other hand, I do not think there is any idea that such a thing would assist the crops.

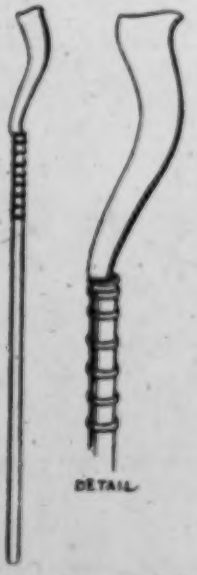

FIG. 3. Gagra used for cutting grass and brushwood
Length 5' 9"

The chelik climbs up onto the platform by a bamboo pole similar to those used for the sago-palms. Sometimes he has a pulley of ropes to haul up food, water and firewood.

From the *tondi* there are often elaborate arrangements of strings, stretching right round the field—a jerk sets a number of clappers banging or scarecrows swinging.

The fields are also protected by magic methods. A gourd, broom and leaf-cup may be hung up together, or a jackal's head,[2] or a black pot decorated with white lines to avert ghosts hostile to fertility.

Permanent Cultivation

The Muria, as I have said, are not dependent on their axe-cultivation. Nearly all of them now have permanent fields, used mostly for rice. Yet even where, as in parts of Kondagaon, axe-cultivation has been largely abandoned,

[1] Another riddle about the *tondi*: 'There are elephant's bones in the middle of the field.'

[2] W. V. Grigson writes to me: 'Equally common is the use of the dried skull of cow or bullock. In Bastar such skulls have been described to me as *Ahavisadar*, the term being explained by ideas derived from Hinduism that because in some former incarnation a man had died without paying his debts, when reborn as a cow or a bullock, his skull in this way was working off the old debt by such service after death.'

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CHAPTER FOUR

THE COURSE OF MURIA LIFE: CHILDHOOD

I. Pregnancy and Birth

[524] *Burka ta jhua undina bedur gutta ti mak dāyna. It drinks gruel from a gourd, but hides among the bamboos.* A baby, drinking at the breast and swinging in a bamboo basket.—Muria riddle

842 PREGNANCY so dreaded in the ghotul is desired at home. Sterility does not seem to be very common—out of the 2000 cases studied only 150 were childless—but a married couple without children are always miserable.

The Muria attribute sterility to various causes. One is a purely physical one. 'I have no child', said the Chalki of Korenda, 'though I go to my wife every day. There may be plenty of rain, but unless there is warmth in the ground to help the seed to grow, there is no harvest.' A former Sirdar of Pupgaon attributed his sterility to the fact that 'perhaps I do not know how to copulate properly'. Wives sometimes say their childlessness is because their husbands have 'wasted all their seed by scattering it in the ghotul fields'.

842 Others give a supernatural reason. At a marriage a witch may slip some evil magic into the bride's dress or hair when she puts tika on her forehead.
●789 A jealous motiari whose 'husband' has been married to another girl may perform spells to stop her supplanter from realizing the fullest joys of marriage. The Constable of Modenar said that Mayakaka Deo or Kondi Deo was the cause of the trouble. 'He stopped my wife having a child for four years. Then we promised him a pig, a goat and five chickens and a child was born.'

Sterility is always a cause of quarrels and disagreements in the home. Husband and wife each accuse the other of being at fault. A former Sirdar of Sodma said, 'We went to each other for seven years till we were weary, and still there was no child; every time my wife's period began, she abused me saying, "Are you a man? Haven't you any strength?" And I used to feel miserable and ashamed.' On the other hand, out of the 2000 marriages examined, none of the few divorces were attributed to this cause.

842 578 [586]

A girl is born in nine months, a boy in ten. 'A girl takes a great deal out of the mother.' Yet women love suffering—*godan* (tattooing), *chodan* (intercourse), and *paidan* (child-bearing). But Muria men seem to do all they can to spare the mother. During pregnancy intercourse must cease after the fifth month. Intercourse is not generally resumed for a year after child-birth, for 'if you sow seed in wet ground, a harvest is certain' and it is important to space confinements properly. After a year, 'when the wife feels an itching for it, she herself goes to lie with her husband'. But in some places, in Alor and Berma for example, I was told that intercourse began again after six months, and at Kabonga that 'a man goes to his wife when their child first smiles'. But most Muria regard a woman as physically unattractive during the puerperium. 'Her breasts and privates are *gilgila*: who would care for them? But once the child can walk, the mother is again lovely in our eyes.'

843 In Masora I was given a catalogue of the various kinds of birth and it is interesting to note that these are largely based on the spacing of confinements.
844 The Sambhar Birth occurs after a space of three years and the child is strong and healthy. The Tiger Birth also comes after three years to a woman of

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776 by the tragic circumstances of his origin. According to universal legend he is the ghost of a young bridegroom who, on the way to his wedding, was killed either by lightning[1] or by a tiger. Frustrated at the moment of achieving happiness, he lives on, soured and bitter, to trouble mankind.

For this reason Dulha Deo is regarded as particularly touchy and there are many stories about his quick temper and his readiness to take an insult and notice a slight. For example, at Silati the Muria described how he interrupted a Kalar marriage at Bara Dongar. A Muria neighbour had dedicated a pig to Dulha Deo. On the morning of the marriage the pig wandered over to the Kalar's house and the Kalar exclaimed, 'Alas! I have seen a pig's face early in the morning'. When Dulha Deo in the form of the pig heard this, he was very angry and stood snorting with rage in front of the house, refusing to allow the marriage to proceed. At last the Kalar had to touch the pig's feet and promise a goat in honour of Dulha Deo.

A practical reason for Dulha Deo's bad reputation may be the fact that at a marriage everybody is very excited, more or less drunk, and hitches in the procedure and quarrels between relations are always likely to occur. Whenever anything goes wrong, the blame is put on the god who must then be properly appeased. Dulha Deo serves a useful purpose as the divine whipping-boy.

Bhimul Pen

[778] In many Muria villages there is a small shrine of four wooden pillars and some cross-poles, but no roof, round one or two stones that may be anything from one to three feet high. These represent the deity who is called variously Bhimul Pen, Bhima or Bhimsen and his wife Bhimsenin or Gorondi Dokari.

I think it probable that there was a very ancient aboriginal deity, a rain-god called Bhimul, whose cult has been assimilated to that of the mightiest of the Pandava brothers, Bhimsen. The Muria expect both Lingo and Bhimul to provide them with rain in due season. If there is a drought, Bhimul's stone is [789] covered with cow-dung with the idea that he will quickly send rain to wash himself clean.[2]

But the Muria Bhimul has many other functions. In eastern Kondagaon, he takes the place of Lingo as the founder of the ghotul and its protector. [534] He is regarded as having a special interest in drums and must be worshipped when a mandri drum is made and when it is used at a wedding. He and his wife are associated with stilt-walking. He appears as the cause of thunder and the fertilizer of the crops.

[796] Bhimul has a special festival to himself in order to ensure a good rainfall. The villagers bring in March a little of whatever seed or vegetable is available and throw it over Bhimul's stone. The Gaita makes the final offerings. Chelik and motiari dance all night.[3]

[1] Crooke, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 119; Russell and Hiralal, op. cit., Vol. III, p. 73.

[2] To get rain, Bombay Hindu villagers 'besmear the phallus of Shiva with cooked rice and curds'.—Enthoven, op. cit., p. 321. The Parja of Bastar are described as fixing a piece of wood into the ground in the name of Bhimsen over which they pour water when they are in need of rain.—Russell and Hiralal, op. cit., Vol. IV, p. 377.

[3] For the widespread cult of this 'heroic godling' both among Hindus and aboriginals, see Crooke, op. cit., Vol. I, pp. 66, 89, 250 and Vol. II, p. 182; Grigson, op. cit., pp. 206, 215, 219; S. C. Roy, *The Mundas and their Country* (Calcutta, 1912), p. 98; *The Baiga*, p. 59 and *passim*; *The Agaria*, p. 93; *The Census of India, 1931*, Vol. I, Part III B, p. 76 (for the cult among the Nagpur Gond); ibid., p. 236 (for the Urali's idea that thunder is the result of a duel between the two Bhima in heaven); Thurston, *Castes and Tribes*, Vol. IV, pp. 56 and 71 (for the Koyi tradition that traces the origin of the tribe to Bhimadeo who while hunting in the jungle met a wild woman of the woods and married

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in each case what kind of worship, what special offerings, what peculiar rites will be acceptable to the god.

These mediums are known in Bastar by the Halbi word Siraha. A Leshi is sometimes the Siraha's assistant; sometimes the words are used synonymously. The Siraha does not offer sacrifice, indeed he is not a priest at all; he is simply a medium through whom the gods make known their will. He has the power of falling into trance, of dancing ecstatically and of diagnosing disease and interpreting the divine commands while in this condition. Scores of these men may be seen at any of the great festivals in the State. With their long hair flying wildly about them as they shake their heads, with scourges and whips in their hands and their drunken, drugged, besotted look, they are a distinctive feature of every Muria religious assembly. Yet, in ordinary life, they are completely normal, sensible, hard-working men and no one would suppose that they were capable of such remarkable transformations.

The Gunia, who understands *gusi* or magical charms, is simply a medicine-man. He is called in to cure the sick, to recover lost property and to discover the culprit when goods or cattle are stolen. The Panjiyar is a diviner who works by measuring bits of grass which he questions until he obtains the correct answer. The Gunia tends rather to work with a winnowing-fan or a lamp. Both use grain for divination.

Another common form of divination in Bastar is by eggs. Among the Hill Maria, the Kaser-Gaita watches the eggs hatched in his house; if these get addled it may be a sign that the village site should be changed. The Muria test the omens by egg-throwing at the time of breaking stilts.[1] All the Bastar tribes use eggs in worship, and offer them before going out to hunt and fish, 'for they are greatly loved by the gods'.

Eggs are liked by the gods because 'an egg is like a virgin whom no one has touched, or a pregnant woman who holds two souls at once'. A curious tale explains the origin of poultry.

> There was an entirely dark village twelve *kos* long. Once the people went out with a widow's son to search for light. They went a long long way until they lay down weary to sleep. When they awoke they found the sun in the sky. The widow's son declared that he had not slept and had seen a one-legged man put the sun there. The others were jealous that he should have seen this sight and killed him. They divided the flesh among themselves and gave some to the boy's mother, who took it not knowing what it was. She put it aside for him to eat when he should return. But next day, early in the morning as the sun came into the sky, the boy's flesh turned into a cock and began to crow. So when a hen lays an egg it is only a lump of flesh; it is when it hears the cock crow that life comes into it. That is why gods and men love eggs—for they are a sign of strength and life.

For this reason, it is said, gods and ghosts are not often responsible for addling eggs; this is done by human enemies. If a setting of eggs is thus spoilt by black magic, it should be lifted up together with its straw and placed on a piece of an earthen pot. It should be taken to a cross-road, where the priest must say, *'Thu ihu, manlotia*, go back to whoever sent you'. He throws away the eggs and the party returns home without looking back. Elsewhere when

[1] Divination by egg-throwing is recorded of the Khasi.—P. R. T. Gurdon, *The Khasis* (London, 1914), pp. 16 and 226ff. In 1942 I found the Juang of Pal Lahara employing the virgin son of the village priest to test the omens, before a festival, by egg-throwing. The use of eggs in worship is widespread in Bastar and Orissa.

the eggs go bad, the priest plucks the feathers of the hen and puts them with the eggs. Broken egg-shells (which are usually preserved on bits of stick and kept under the roof) are added and all are taken to a cross-road. The priest cries, '*Thu thu*, you wanted to injure my hen. Take this and go away'. After this, the hen grows new feathers and the next lot of eggs will be good.

In the north-west of the State, the son of the village Gaita has a position of privilege in the ghotul and is often appointed its leader, but in the rest of the State the boys of the priestly families have no special privileges and can claim no special office; they are treated exactly the same as any other boys. But the Gaita's and Siraha's sons begin their training as priests or mediums while they are still boys, and many chelik have the power of falling into trance and prophesying. In Masora I saw chelik being taught how to bathe the gods and carry them about. In Kollibera I watched the Gaita teaching two of the chelik how to sacrifice chickens and offer egg-shells to the gods at the end of the Pus Kolang expedition. Parents often take their sons to special festivals so that they can learn what to do by imitation. The chelik usually attend ceremonies as acolytes and prepare the sacrificial food, wash the vessels, and make ready the sacrificial hearth. In this way the future Gaita or Pujari learns his business. The function of Siraha or Gunia is not always hereditary, but boys are chosen and trained when it is found that they are of an unusually sensitive temperament.

VII. White and Black Magic

Hitherto we have been dealing with Muria religion mainly in its relation to the gods; we must now take a brief glance at its prophylactic and protective measures on behalf of man against his natural and ghostly enemies. Chelik and motiari are protected against black magic by the divine power of the ghotul fence, but they are only safe while they are inside the ghotul. Evil powers cannot enter the building, but they camp all round, and the Muria boy and girl grow up in an atmosphere of battle in the unseen world.

Black magic entered the world through an insufficiency. Bhagavan had seven daughters. He had prepared flour with which to create man, but his daughters stole and ate a little from some of the heaps of flour. In these there was thus not enough material for them to become real human beings and they became magicians and witches. Because of their lack of flesh and blood, they try to steal flesh and drink the blood of men. The warlock and witch are thus sub-human, not fully created. In the untouched Muria tradition, the enemy of mankind is usually a man; belief in female witches and the evil eye of woman is generally a later and Hindu accretion to the old beliefs.

The story comes from Karikhodra. In it we see that the warlock and witch are sub-human, not fully created. In other stories witchcraft originates in disobedience and cannibalism. In Matawal in the Mardapal Pargana we were told the following tale:

> A Muria and his sister left their parents' house and went out to seek for work. After a time they returned home and wished to make an offering to Mother Earth. They went to the shrine of the goddess and the boy said to his sister, 'Whatever you do, do not eat any of the flesh sacrificed here'. They found that the Gaita had put some flesh on a saja leaf in the name of the goddess before her shrine. As they approached a crow flew down, ate some of the flesh and scattered the rest. The boy picked it up and put it back again on the leaf. Behind the shrine a lot of blood from the animals offered and sacrificed had

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764 Once again the party went to the stream, but the Gaita and the Waddai stayed behind and addressed the saja stick: 'For one month more you will get nothing, don't go to your house, but stay here'. After a bath they all (with the exception of the drummers) went to the deceased's house. The drummers, who are regarded as unclean for the duration of the ceremony, bathed and washed their drums. They applied and placed some rice on the drums. To them they also sacrificed a chicken and offered the blood and some liquor. The drummers were then given rice, which they cooked separately, and a shoulder of the cow. After eating their food they went to their own houses.

789 The conclusion of the story is worth recording. A month later, the Waddai went with the villagers to the boundary of the village carrying a chicken, a pig, an egg, egg-shells, a bamboo bow and arrow, burnt earth from below the hearth, charcoal powder, rice, pulse and haldi. All these things were taken in separate leaf-cups. The Waddai arranged them in seven rows and made a chicken eat the rice, calling on Markami Bando's magic to go away. The chicken ate the rice quickly. But this was not sufficient proof that the black magic had really been driven away, 'because every hungry creature will naturally feed upon what it can get'. The Waddai, therefore, tortured the chicken, first by breaking one leg, and still it ate; he broke another leg, and again it ate; then he broke the wings and the fowl though in pain and agony went on eating. It was now beyond doubt that Bando's magic had been dealt with successfully and the chicken was thrown away, still alive, and not sacrificed. The pig was then sacrificed and the Waddai drew a line on the boundary of the village where the seven rows were arranged, spat there and said, 'Away from this line' and they all departed without looking back. In this ceremony the household members did not take part.

The next day the Waddai sacrificed under a mahua tree near the house a white chicken and broke an egg in honour of the ancestral ghost of Kosa's father. After this he entered the house and sprinkled it with a mixture of milk, saja bark,
769 and dab grass to purify it and sacrificed a black chicken for the Ancestors of the family.

775 Special precautions must, of course, be taken when anyone

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775 dies a violent death. The ghost of a man killed by a tiger may possess the animal and drive it to take vengeance on other members of the community: the victim of snake-bite dwells in the snake's tail and drives it to homicidal fury.[1]

775 789 Women dying in pregnancy and childbirth become very dangerous after death and their ghosts must be laid by special ceremonies which include the driving of nails into the knees and elbows of the corpse and at the four corners of the grave, over which a herd of buffaloes may sometimes be driven.

VIII

764 In the neighbourhood of almost every Maria village will be found a row of menhirs erected in memory and for the appeasement of the Dead. Sometimes these stones are very large; sometimes they are quite small and are expected to grow bigger in course of time. The majority of clans erect an upright pillar which is called urakal. But a number of them place instead a danyakal, a large flat stone supported on four smaller ones.

In the ceremonies attending the bringing of a menhir, the sister's son again plays a leading part. Led by him a party of three drummers and a man beating a gong and twenty or thirty men go out to the quarry where the stone has already been cut out or to some hill where a suitable rock has been observed. The sister's son touches the stone and addresses the dead man. 'In your name', he says, 'we are bringing this stone; let it be light, let not the burden be too heavy'. They place poles below and above the stone, lashing them together with rope. Then the sister's son with a drum in his hand climbs on to the stone and begins to drum with a new rhythm which goes *gul-gucha, gul-gucha, gul-gucha*. Some twenty men lift up the stone whistling loudly, *soor, soor, whee, whee*, and swing it to and fro. Then they move towards the place where the menhir is to be erected, the drummers dancing and drumming in

[1] Such accidental deaths are far from uncommon. In 1938, in the whole State 55 persons were killed by tigers, 10 by panthers, 4 by bears, 53 by drowning, 102 by snake-bite, 53 by falling from trees (chiefly the tall toddy and sago palms). The great majority of these accidents were to aboriginals and every one involved the relatives in complex and hazardous ceremonies for their protection.

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764 has been specially hollowed out for this purpose. Usually
273 there is no stock of rice-beer at hand and it cannot be made so quickly. The Maria then mix a little mandia flour with water and give this instead.

If for any reason in the course of the ceremony some rite or custom is omitted the spirit of the dead man may attack one or other of the mourners in order to show his displeasure. For example, at Gadapal, Burka Peda told me that they once forgot to give landa to the old menhirs and the insulted Dead attacked his father's sister and she fell down in a fit. They quickly gave both landa and mahua liquor to all the menhirs and she recovered. Again in Mahara-Karka one Kuhrami Eriya was hurled into the fire by the angry ghost and his leg was burnt. If this happens it is a good plan for the victim to run and catch
● [189] hold of the bamboo poles with which the stone was carried. The Gaita pours water upon him and the angry ghost leaves him alone.

IX

322 When a very well-known or wealthy man dies his family
766 sometimes erects a carved wooden pillar to his memory.
554 There are very few of these pillars, though the custom of making them is far from moribund, but the expense is great and only the most important people are considered worthy of them.

322 These pillars are called by Grigson uragatta, a word that
766 is obviously formed on the same plan as uraskal, from *urasna* meaning 'to bury' and *gatta*—'a pillar'. I have not myself found any Maria using the word or even recognizing it when it has been put to them. It may be that its use has died out. The Maria to whom I have spoken call these pillars either *munde* (Gondi) or *kambha* (Halbi or Hindi).

The pillars are usually erected near a highway—not necessarily a motorable one. It should simply be near any road or path that is constantly used by the people. The pillars are usually made of saja or sarai wood and are erected with ceremonies very similar to those for a stone.

There are not many of these pillars, but they are worth looking at. There is a very fine one near Dilmilli

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764 he murdered. The stone next to his is for Marvi Buta who was also sentenced for this murder and also died in jail. But there was nothing at all in honour of the murdered man.

764 532 The erection of a carved memorial pillar is probably the greatest honour that the Maria can pay to the dead. It is the equivalent of being buried in Westminster Abbey. Masa's pillar is a very fine one. It shows him as a Siraha sitting on a swing: a streamer of untidy hair blows out from his head. Another carving shows him mounted on an elephant. Another portrays him riding on a horse attended by his wives. All round him are the symbols of his life; deer and tigers represent his love of the chase; axes, swords and knives symbolize his valour and enterprise; two men carry a pot of rice-beer in memory of his drinking prowess.

775 789 The business of keeping the ghost of the murderer or his victim quiet naturally greatly exercises the minds of the village medicine-men and priests. There is danger either that the ghost will cause trouble among the other ghosts of the family, and thus by annoying the ancestors may bring trouble upon the living: or it may inspire another member of the family also to commit a murder; or it may return and simply make itself troublesome. At Phulpar, after Pandu had been hanged and the usual ceremonies performed, the village priest sacrificed a hen near the pyre saying, 'Now we make your home here: live here with your ancestors peacefully'. If they fail to do this, they said, they think someone else in the house will also commit a murder. Then they erected a saja pole and after sacrificing a cow to appease the ghost of the dead man, each relative in turn picked up the cow's tail, saluted it and hung it on the pole. The Waddai went to a corner of the room where the Pot of the Departed was kept, sprinkled liquor there and addressed the ghost: 'Live now with your sons. Do not go to your daughters. Care for the people of your house. See that your children prosper'.

Often, after the ceremony of burning the clothes and ornaments, a man sits in the house of the deceased and the ghost comes upon him. He is led out to the pyre, and there he buries a *bhut kukri*, a ghost hen, to ensure that the ghost will not come to the house and trouble its relatives.

The ghost of the murderer or his victim becomes a Mirchuk.

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Sometimes it is supposed that this Mirchuk possesses a man and makes him commit a murder. At Gudra, when Kawachi Linga returned from jail after serving a homicide sentence, a black chicken was sacrificed to the Mirchuk of his victim. But the chicken refused to eat the rice that is always offered to test it before it is killed, and the people thought that this meant that Linga would be possessed by the spirit of his first victim and thus be driven to commit another murder. To avert this danger they sacrificed a pig and a cow, and only then readmitted him to their society.

The Mirchuk, whatever its origin may be, may be employed by a witch as her familiar and servant. She gets control over it and uses it to assist her in her wicked designs.

The Mirchuk is very quarrelsome, and the spirit of a man who has been hanged must not be mingled with the other ancestors in the Room of the Departed, for it is sure to cause trouble. So the Mirchuk is generally located outside the village under a large stone, in an ant-hill or in a mahua tree. At Dhurli we were told that, when Telami Hunga was murdered, his ghost was kept apart, for he was a student of magic and such persons turn into Rao Bhut. For such no uraskal should be erected, nor should the ghost be mingled with the other Departed.

Indeed it is often held that the ghosts of the slain and of executed criminals should not be 'mingled with the Departed' and nothing should be put for them in the sacred Pot in the ordinary way.[1] When the boy Ando was murdered by his uncle Irma, this precaution was taken. Ando's ghost still roams the village, an axe in its hands, seeking vengeance. Irma's ghost is said to have possessed itself of the rope with which he was hanged and people were afraid it might use it to hang the other Departed of his clan or to steal their cows.

It is very dangerous for a murderer to see the ghost of his victim while he is in jail, perhaps because it is impossible there to perform the proper ceremonies of protection. Pandu

[1] Mateer reported that in Travancore the ghosts of executed murderers were regarded as specially dangerous and were believed to haunt the place of execution. To prevent this the executioner used to cut off the criminal's heels with a sword or hamstring him as he was thrown off. S. Mateer *The Land of Charity* (London, 1871), pp. 203 f.